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Human Services Committee Public Hearing

Testimony in support of Raised bill 390: AN ACT CONCERNING A TWO- GENERATIONAL INITIATIVE.

Good Afternoon Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie and Members of the Committee,

My name is Elizabeth Fraser; I am a policy analyst at the Connecticut Association for Human Services. CAHS works to reduce poverty and promote economic success through both policy and program work.

I am here today in support of Raised Bill 390: an act concerning a two- generational initiative. This bill provides technical changes and additions to direct the intention and development of Connecticut's two- generation education and workforce initiative, which was codified in 2015.

Several of the modifications are clarifications.

- The definition of "household" is expanded to ensure that non-custodial parents and other caregivers, such as grandparents may be included in the projects.
- The "Greater Hartford Area" is defined as Hartford, West Hartford and East Hartford.
- Health and mental health services have been added to the components to be offered to program participants.

In addition:

- The structure of the Inter-agency council has been modified to include legislators from both sides of the aisle and to expand legislative committee presence to include representation of the education, public health, housing and transportation committees.
- It intentionally includes one parent from each pilot community to serve on the Inter-agency Council. Implicit in the additional language is that parents will play a key role in informing the development and progression of the project.

The biggest modification in the bill is the language defining the project evaluation and potential project outcomes. Ongoing evaluation is a key to the success of any project, as means to continually assess progress and modify strategies to achieve stronger results. Currently, the evaluation language requires reporting on specific outcomes at the family level including how many parents got jobs, received certificates or degrees and how many children have improved academically, had achievement band increases and increased reading comprehension. The parent objectives, while important to track, are really longer term objectives; it is unlikely that such specific results will be achieved in the timeframe of

this pilot. In addition, the objectives to be tracked for children do not necessarily reflect the age of the children that will be included in the pilots.

The new language is more realistic and centers on a formative evaluation of the developing pilot models. This type of evaluation is more informative in the early stages of a project. In this case, it will give us a sense of how to best design, implement and potentially expand two- generation practices. It should be noted that although not as specific, individual outcomes will still need to be measured and reported on. These objectives will be developed by the interagency workgroup with support from state and national evaluators overseeing and conducting the evaluation.

The technical modifications in this bill inform the direction of the project, are more direct, include the voice of actual parents, and are more realistic. They make the statute stronger and we are in support of the changes.